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Methodism in Bramley
by Joseph Hill, 1859

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MEMORIALS
OF
METHODISM
IN
BRAMLEY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST,

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—
1859.

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TO THE
REV. JAMES ALLEN,

Wesleyan Minister,

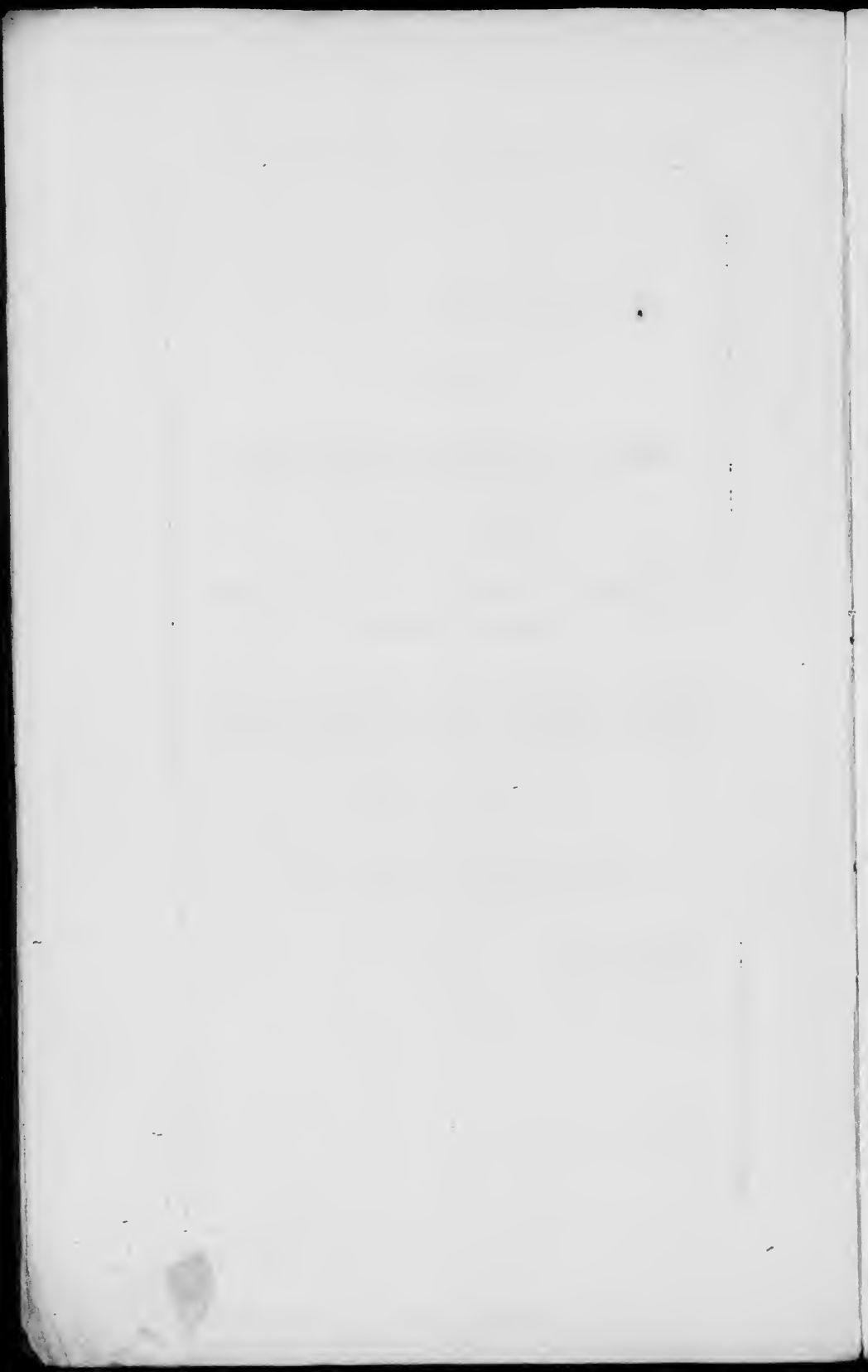
FORMERLY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE
BRAMLEY CIRCUIT,

These Memorials of Methodism,

ARE, WITH GREAT RESPECT,

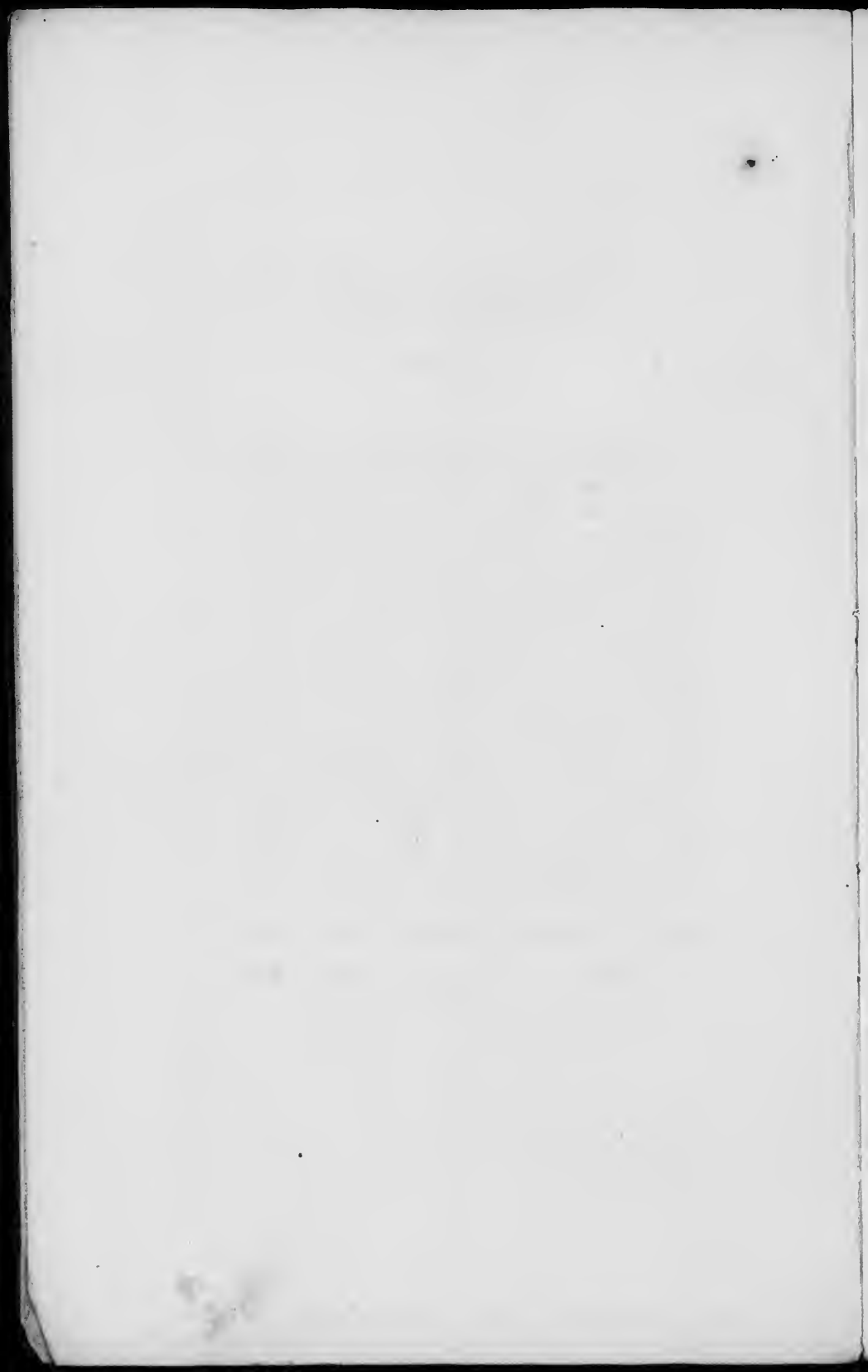
Inscribed by Joseph Hill.

BRAMLEY, 1859.



PREFACE.

A successful effort for reducing the Debt on the Wesleyan Chapel, Bramley, was brought to a happy conclusion on the twenty-eighth day of December, 1858; on which occasion the following account was read, and at the request of the Meeting is now published. It has been compiled from Memoirs, private documents, and reminiscences of aged persons; and probably may be interesting to a limited circle of friends: albeit the writer believes that its favourable reception was chiefly attributable to the good feeling which pervaded that respectable assembly.



Methodism in Bramley.

A hundred years ago, the Rev. J. Thomas, then Incumbent of this Township, was suddenly taken away from his pastoral charge, and at the age of fifty-eight years entered into rest. We gather this from a Brass Tablet now in our Church, which describes his character in the Latin language; a higher than which cannot be ascribed to any Minister of the Blessed Saviour. One half of his life he spent in this Township, and exercised the office of a faithful Pastor during that time. To such a man it must have been painful to observe the ungodliness that prevailed, not only in this Village, but all around. The profane and cruel practices of Bull-baiting and Cock-fighting were frequently exhibited, and the population generally were in a state of semi-barbarism, and lamentably ignorant and vicious.

It was fifteen years before the death of this Reverend Clergyman, that Methodism was introduced into Bramley. Among the first Preachers were John Nelson, of Birstal; William Shent, of Leeds; and the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw, Vicar

of Haworth. The first Class Leader was one Mr. Briggs, who came from Leeds weekly, to meet and encourage the few who were anxious to flee from the wrath to come, and to be united to the Society that was then everywhere spoken against. Of this excellent man, and of his useful labours, there is some memorial in one of the old Magazines.

The first Meetings for Religious Worship were held at the Top of Bell Lane, in a house occupied by William Hardaker, and very frequently the small company thus assembling were disturbed by persons whose names we shall not put on record, because the *Righteous only* shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Some of these persecutors, who claimed the title of Gentlemen, not choosing to be seen in their true character, employed a man of less delicacy and more courage, to annoy those who attended the Class Meetings, by blowing a Horn at the Door of the House in which they were assembled. It was usual at that time, and sometime afterwards, for a man whose office it was, and who was commonly named the "*Horn Man*," to go round the Village every morning at Five o'clock, to rouse the people from their slumbers, and to remind them that it was time to commence their daily labour: this he did by blowing his Horn; and with this Horn he was wont to disturb these devout

worshippers, blowing it so loudly as to prevent their hearing one another. He with several others frequently waited the conclusion of the Class Meeting, and having provided themselves with different sorts of missiles, pelted the harmless people, as they made the best of their way home.

On one occasion a Mob was assembled in order to put a stop to the career of Methodism, by making a public example of the Preacher. They proceeded to the House at the Top of Bell Lane, in which the Preacher was, and where he was presently to begin the Public Worship of God. The Ruffians had signified their intention of pulling him down, and dragging him through the Bramley Fall into the River Aire. The courage and resolution of a woman, however, withstood these Sons of Belial; for, being aware of their approach, the Mistress of the House desired the Preacher to step into the next room, while she stood at the door with tongs in her hand, forbidding any one at his peril to invade her parlour.

The following Sabbath, however, these wicked men, mortified by their disgraceful defeat, enlisted some more desperadoes to assist in the same iniquitous design, having the Constable at their head. The same Preacher whom they sought the preceding Sunday, was in the discus-

sion of his subject, earnestly calling sinners to repentance;—and while they were in the very act of opening the door, a tremendous clap of thunder so terribly alarmed the persecutors, that they ran away, Constable and all, leaving the Preacher and Congregation to proceed with Divine Worship. This circumstance was long afterwards the subject of animadversion, and was related to the writer of this account by the venerable Richard Grainger, late of Calverley, who had it from one who was present and witnessed the whole affair.

We learn from Mr. Wesley's Journal that when Brother Maskew was preaching on White Cote Hill in 1751, a Mob arose, broke the windows and doors of the house in which the Congregation was assembled, and struck the Constable, Joseph Hawley, (Haley) one of the Society, a man of very different character to the person mentioned above. "On this," says the writer, "we indicted them for an assault, but the ringleader of the Mob, John Hollingworth, indicted our Brother the Constable, and got persons to swear that the Constable struck him."

"The Grand Jury threw out our indictment, found theirs against us, so we stood trial with them, on Monday, July the 15th, 1751. The Recorder, Richard Wilson, Esq., gave it in our

favour, with the rest of the Court. But the Foreman of the Jury, Matthew Priestley, with two others, Richard Cloudsly and Jabez Bunnell, would not agree with the rest, being our avowed enemies."

"The Foreman was Mr. Murgatroyd's great friend and champion against the Methodists. However, the Recorder gave strict orders to a guard of Constables to watch the Jury. that they should have neither meat, drink, candles, nor tobacco, till they were agreed in their verdict. They were kept prisoners all that night and next day till five in the afternoon, when one of the Jury said, 'he would die before he would give it against us.' Then he spoke closely to the Foreman concerning his prejudice against the Methodists, till at last he condescended to refer it to one man."

"Him the other charged to speak as he would answer it to God in the day of judgment. The man turned pale, trembled, and desired that another might decide it."

"Another, John Hardwick, being called upon, immediately decided in favour of the Methodists. After the trial, Sir Henry Ibison, (Ibbetson,) one of the Justices, called one of our Brethren to him, and said, 'You see, God never forsakes a righteous man; take care you never forsake him.' "

Mr. John Wesley visited Bramley while the Society was in its infancy. "Saturday, 7th of Oct. 1749, I rode in the afternoon to *Bramley*, and preached to a large and quiet congregation. Great attention appeared in every face, but no shaking among the dry bones yet."

On Friday, 24th of July, 1761, Mr. Wesley preached again at Bramley.

The Society had provided themselves with an old Barn in which the Sunday Services were conducted, and other Meetings were frequently held in the Manor House, and in Bell Lane. But as their numbers increased, they felt the want of a more suitable place of Worship; and accordingly erected their first Chapel in 1777, which was built near the site of the present Chapel, but nearly close up to the street.

Among the worthies of those primitive times are enumerated, George Beecroft, John Holmes, and James Hobson, and honourable women not a few.

George Beecroft was born at Hawksworth, near Otley, in February, 1710. He was bold, energetic, and industrious; but a stranger to religion until he came to Bramley. He was awakened under a Sermon preached by Mr. North, and joined the small society consisting at that time of nine persons, he making the tenth, who were met by the Leader before named, Mr. Joseph

Briggs of Leeds. The two Wesleys, J. Fletcher, Geo. Whitfield, and many more of the best men of those days were entertained under Mr. Beecroft's roof, and preached in one of his rooms, so that the house which stood on Beecroft's Hill was usually called the "*Pilgrim's Inn*." He held on his way, and became a useful zealous Leader, and was very exemplary in his punctual attendance, even in harvest time, when his Farm might have required all the attention he could give it. After having endured a dreadful conflict with the powers of darkness, in which there seems to have been something remarkable, but not distinctly told, he recovered his wonted cheerfulness and confidence. His last days were days of rapturous exultation, and in this happy state of mind he died, full of consolation and immortal hope, aged eighty-three years.

John Holmes was another of that faithful band, who fainted not in the hour of trial. He had a long and painful affliction, and to use the expression of his daughter, "He was a *very tried man*";—but he came out of his trials untarnished; for he expired in the 73rd year of his age, with the memorable words of the Patriarch Job on his lips, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

James Hobson was a man of no common excellence. When he became a member of the

Society, the number had increased to thirty : he suffered persecution, both at home and elsewhere. His wife enlisted among the number of his persecutors, and was certainly in good earnest ; for she believed that to follow such men as John Wesley and his associates, was the direct road to beggary. Having long entreated him to break off all communion with this people without effect, she at length threatened to leave him if he went any more to the Class Meetings. When the next night for Meeting came, James prepared as usual to go, while his wife warmly protested against it, and declared she would leave the house that very night. James heard all she had to say ; and then with much feeling replied, "that if she would not accompany him to heaven, he must make the best of his way thither without her, and that, at all events, he would not go with her to hell." The wife was struck with the firm but mild manner in which he spoke, and resolved to follow her husband, and listen at the door of the house in which the Class Meeting was being held, in order to learn what sort of conversation was being carried on in these private assemblies. What she heard at that door sank deep into her heart. A painful conviction, which she had never before entertained, of her own guilt and danger, overpowered her selfishness, and softened her obduracy ;—and she, who went to the door

of the Class Meeting a fiery persecutor, returned home a trembling penitent. The sequel is interesting : the husband and wife went together to the Meeting the following week ; and Jane, after earnestly imploring the Divine mercy through Jesus Christ, obtained pardon sooner than her respected husband. In the midst of a thunder-storm which passed over Bramley a few days after Jane's conversion, she was singing that fine Hymn on the coming of Christ to Judgment, the 56th in Wesley's Collection, and when repeating the couplet

His lightnings flash ; his thunders roll ;
How welcome to the faithful soul !

Her husband exclaimed "Oh, what would I give, if I could use that language !" It was not long, however, before he also found peace, and their subsequent lives were in unison with their blessed experience. James Hobson died in the 90th year of his age, and his holy and consistent life was crowned with a triumphant end. Jane Hobson, his wife, walked humbly with God in company with her husband for the space of thirty years, and was then taken to her reward : her last words were, "The Lord will receive me ; He will receive me."

Mr. Wesley's third visit to this place was three years after the erection of the first Methodist Chapel, to which we have already

alluded. He was then 77 years of age, and an extract from his Journal will show how vigorous a man he was at that advanced period of his life, "Monday, April 17th, 1780.—I left Leeds in one of the roughest mornings I have ever seen. We had rain, hail, snow, and wind in abundance. About nine I preached at *Bramley*, between one and two at *Pudsey*; afterwards I walked to *Fulneck*, the German Settlement. Mr. Moore shewed us the House, Chapel, Hall, Lodging-Rooms, &c.—likewise the Workshops of various kinds, with the Shops for Grocery, Drapery, Mercery, Hardware, &c., with which, as well as with bread from their bakehouse, they furnish the adjacent country. In the evening I preached at *Bradford*."

The Society had now increased, and the number of hearers was greatly multiplied. Many excellent persons eminent for piety, both male and female, witnessed a good confession before many witnesses, who have long since been gathered into the Paradise of God.

William Field was of later date; but a man whose integrity was severely tested in his passage through life. There was something of apparent sternness about his manner, especially when he administered rebuke to a lukewarm professor. For many years he carried on a prosperous business: but the storms of adversity overtook

him after he had attained the age of three score and ten years. One loss succeeded another until he was reduced from a state of competency to dependence upon his friends. He was not the man, however, to sink under difficulties: his energy, and skill, and industry still remained, even at that advanced age; and under the Divine blessing, his circumstances improved, and, after paying all his creditors, he retired from business on a comfortable independence. The writer of this paper found him calm and undismayed in the near approach of the last enemy;—testifying to many visitors of the faithfulness of Him who has said, “I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.” He died on the 2nd of February, 1822, aged 88 years.

Mary Field, first wife of William Field, was born at Fulneck, 1726. She and her husband were awakened under a Funeral Sermon on the death of Henry Beanland in 1760. She is described as one of the excellent of the Earth, by our oldest Leader, Mr. John Bottomley, who lived under her roof.

In 1802 the Old Chapel was enlarged; and in 1811 Bramley was separated from Leeds and made the Head of a Circuit as it is at this day.

It was in the year 1813 that some method of raising Funds for extending the operations of the Methodist Missions, was found to be

indispensable. Dr. Bunting, then Mr. Bunting, Dr. Coke, the Rev. George Morley, and one or two others, came from Leeds to Bramley, and met a few of the Friends, in company with the Rev. W. Naylor, &c., to consult about a plan for carrying out their wishes. The House in which they met was that of the late Mr. Wilson; a House which was many years the hospitable home of Methodist Preachers, and as well deserves the name of "Pilgrim's Inn" as the one mentioned before. In a room in this honoured house was planned the method of advocating the claims of the Heathen World, by holding *Missionary Meetings*.* From this place went forth a flame which will never be extinguished, while there remains a nation under heaven to bless. Let it be recorded then, that Mr. Wilson was one who stood the firm friend of Methodism in the dark and cloudy day, as well as in the sun-shine of prosperity. He became a Member of Society in 1793, the same year in which Mr. Beecroft died, and was for many years a diligent Class Leader, was deeply interested in the prosperity of Sabbath Schools, and a labourer therein: and sustained successively every office which the Society could confer upon him. He died on the 20th of Dec. 1844, aged 75 years.

* The First Missionary Meeting was held in Leeds, October 16th, 1813. A Sermon was preached by the Rev. Richard Watson.

There is a memorable period in our Society's History, which ought to be briefly mentioned on this occasion: we refer to that remarkable Revival which took place in 1831.

In the month of September in that year, a Leaders' Meeting was held in the Vestry of Bramley Chapel, the late Rev. Thomas Preston being Superintendent, in which, all concurred that a *special effort* should be made for the religious improvement of our Society. No dissentient voice or discordant feeling existed:—and more than that, we left that Meeting with the belief that “the time, the set time to favour Zion, was just at hand.” Two Leaders were deputed to invite Edward Brooke, Esq. to commence a course of Special Services, which he did on Thursday, September 29th, 1831, by preaching to a Congregation of nearly 1800 persons, who had crowded into the Chapel. In the Prayer Meeting which followed the Sermon, a deep, solemn, trembling sense of the Divine presence seemed to pervade the whole of that large assembly; then followed the low, struggling, suppressed cries of penitent mourners; and then the prayers of men who seemed to be inspired for the occasion. No one present on that memorable night can ever forget the Divine influence vouchsafed to the praying remnant of God's people.

The gracious visitation continued to the end of the year, during which time two hundred souls were added to our Society, many of whom have died in the full triumph of faith, and others are still remaining, as witnesses of what has now been stated. The Revs. Thomas Preston, Josiah Goodwin, and William Hurt, then stationed in the Circuit, were eminently qualified for carrying on the Work of God: they were laborious Ministers of Jesus Christ; and through their instrumentality the new converts were established in the faith.

The blessed fruits of this Revival were *abiding*: the new converts generally held on their way, steadily growing in grace, and in the knowledge and love of the Truth:—and in February, 1838, the Society was favoured with another remarkable effusion of the Holy Spirit. Night after night the Prayer Meetings were attended by enquiring penitents, who were crying out “What must we do to be saved?” These for the most part were gathered into our Classes, so that at the December visitation in the same year our Society in Bramley alone numbered 573 Members. In this latter Revival two Ministers were greatly honoured of God, who now rest from their labours, namely the Rev. John Sedgwick, and the Rev. Charles Radcliffe.

Among those who took an active part in the erection of the Sunday School, are many honourable names, some of whom are gone to their reward. The late Mr. Joshua Burton, Mr. Joseph Musgrave, and Mr. John Lister were the principal contributors. It was opened by the late Mr. Wm. Dawson of Barnbow, on Sept. 30th, 1821, the entire cost having been defrayed by Subscriptions and Collections, amounting to £358. 3s. 10d. Another story was added in the year 1836, at a cost of £450.

In 1823, the Old Chapel was taken down, and the present Chapel erected somewhat further from the public street; the Foundation Stone was laid by the Rev. George Marsden, on the 19th of March, and the Opening Services, Jan. 16th and 18th, 1824, were conducted by the Revs. Robert Newton, John Bowers, John Anderson, and George Marsden; the Collections realized upwards of £200. This Chapel was enlarged in the year 1845; and an Organ placed in the Gallery, in the year 1855, principally through the liberality of the late Mr. J. Procter.

The overburdened state of the Chapel Trusts had long been the source of much anxiety, and in November, 1857, the Trustees determined upon a special effort to reduce the Debt upon the Chapel, which then amounted to £3344. Their appeal was nobly responded to, not only

by the Bramley Society and Congregation, but throughout the Circuit. The Ladies also, ever ready to help a good cause, made arrangements for a Bazaar in aid of the same object, which was held in May, 1858. Christian friends of various denominations lent their aid to the movement, the success of which greatly exceeded the most sanguine expectations of its promoters. These combined exertions produced the following results :—

	£.	s.	d.
Subscribed by the Trustees, - - -	610	0	0
Collected by do. - - -	192	19	0
Collected by the Rev. James Allen, -	94	15	0
Proceeds of Bazaar, &c., - - -	385	9	8
Grant from Chapel Relief Fund, -	200	0	0
Loan from do. do. } to be repaid in ten years, - - }	300	0	0
Total, -	<u>£1783</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>

The preceding Memorials may perhaps be read at a future day by some young persons who shall take pleasure in the gates of our Zion, and who will live to see the beautiful house of their Fathers completely relieved from Debt,—and honoured with such glorious and repeated Revivals of Religion, as will usher in the millennial glory of the Universal Church.



WESLEYAN MINISTERS

Stationed at Bramley,

Since it became the Head of a Circuit.

- ~~~~~
- 1811-12 Robert Pilter, Robert Wood.
 - 1813-14 William Naylor, James Everett.
 - 1815-16 Thomas Bartholomew, William Atherton.
 - 1817 Cleland Kirkpatrick, William Atherton.
 - 1818 Cleland Kirkpatrick, William Coultas.
 - 1819 George Sargent, William Coultas.
 - 1820 George Sargent, Thomas Garbutt.
 - 1821 William Midgley, Thomas Garbutt.
 - 1822 William Midgley, Thomas Slugg.
 - 1823 Joseph Sutcliffe, A. M., Thomas Slugg.
 - 1824-25 John Farrar, Sen., James Etchells.
 - 1826-27 William Harrison, Sen., William Jackson.
 - 1828-29 William France, Henry Fish, M. A.
 - 1830 Thomas Preston, Richard Treffry, Jun.
 - 1831 Thomas Preston, Josiah Godwin, William Hurt.
 - 1832 Joseph Meek, Josiah Goodwin, William Hurt.
 - 1833 Joseph Meek, William Carlton, Francis Barker.
 - 1834 Thomas Eastwood, William Carlton, F. Barker.
 - 1835-36 James Blackett, Charles Radcliffe, John Lewis.
 - 1837 John Sedgwick, Charles Radcliffe, John Bolam.
 - 1338-39 John Sedgwick, William Vevers, John Bolam.
 - 1840 William Leach, Samuel Sugden, Hy. Smallwood.
 - 1841 Samuel Sugden, Thomas Cutting, H. Smallwood.
 - 1842 James Allen, Israel Holgate, John Hobkirk.
 - 1843 James Allen, Israel Holgate, James Beckwith.
 - 1844 James Allen, Samuel Broadbent, James Beckwith.
 - 1845 Samuel Broadbent, Roger Moore, Dixon Naylor.
 - 1846 Roger Moore, T. M. Fitzgerald, Dixon Naylor.
 - 1847-48 Benj. Clough, Joshua Hocken, T. M. Fitzgerald.
 - 1849 Benjamin Clough, James Kendall, R. M. Willcox.
 - 1850 William Binning, James Kendall, R. M. Willcox.
 - 1851 Thomas Dickin, Thomas Richardson.
 - 1852-53 Thomas Dickin, William Chambers.
 - 1854 Benjamin Firth, John Stephenson, Samuel Lord.
 - 1855-56 Benjamin Firth, Samuel Merrill.
 - 1857 Samuel Merrill, J. D. Julian.
 - 1858 Joseph Roberts, J. D. Julian, G. T. Taylor.
 - 1859 J. Hornby, W. Faulkner, G. T. Taylor, H. Beeson.

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